

# Peterborough Regional College

Report following a monitoring visit to a 'requires improvement' provider

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**Name of lead inspector:** Rebecca Perry, HMI

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**Type of provider:** General further education college

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## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

Peterborough Regional College was inspected in May 2019. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

The focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in addressing the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

Peterborough Regional College (PRC) is a medium-sized college. The main campus is located close to Peterborough city centre. There are a further two small sites nearby for adult employability programmes, and for media and journalism. PRC serves the combined authority of Peterborough and Cambridgeshire. PRC offers courses in most subject areas from entry level to level 4. There are 2,900 learners aged 16–19, of which 154 are learners who have high needs, 1,500 adult learners and 800 apprentices.

### Themes

**What progress have governors and leaders made in selecting a curriculum that takes account of the needs of learners and employers and enables learners to successfully progress on to defined end points, including their next stage of education, training or employment? Reasonable progress**

Governors and leaders have improved the curriculum effectively. They have taken swift action to improve the weakest areas of provision. Courses available enable young people to progress to further learning or employment. For example, leaders have made significant changes to qualifications offered in computing, ensuring coherent progression to higher level.

Leaders have adapted the curriculum to meet the changing needs of employers. For example, leaders have reduced the number of additional qualifications on sports programmes. They now only include qualifications which add value for learners, such as personal trainer and gym instructor. As a result, learners gain the appropriate knowledge and skills to meet employers' needs.

Governors and leaders work effectively with another local college to plan the curriculum offer. Leaders work closely with local partners to identify career opportunities. For example, they have successfully introduced level 2 barbering to meet the increasing demand for male grooming. This has resulted in more male learners taking hairdressing qualifications.

Leaders work effectively with the combined authority in the area. Consequently, the offer aligns more closely to local priorities. They have improved adult employability programmes, such as an expanded ESOL provision. Leaders have further improved their close working with Jobcentre Plus. However, it is too soon to judge the impact of these changes.

Leaders ensure that learners receive effective careers advice and guidance. This service is well coordinated. As a result, most learners are clear about their next steps and how to achieve them. Learners who intend to progress to higher education are particularly well prepared for their next steps. Most learners value the careers support available through the college. More learners benefit from live project briefs as part of their programme of study. Most have increased contact with employers.

**What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring staff improve their teaching practices to secure and sustain improvements to the quality of education? Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have ensured that teachers improve the quality of their teaching. They give high priority to securing improvements in the quality of education. Leaders have successfully used a range of development activities with staff. All staff have useful improvement action plans. Managers use these to help staff prioritise areas for development in their teaching. Many teachers elect to work with advanced practitioners to improve their teaching.

Leaders have created a positive learning culture for staff at the college. Staff are keen to take part in professional development. Staff share best practice effectively at weekly curriculum meetings and college training events. New staff receive targeted training to meet their development needs. Agency staff also benefit from professional discussions about their practice. Staff highly value the strong support they receive.

Most teachers assess the progress learners make effectively. They plan learning effectively, to ensure that learners succeed. Most use assessment effectively in order to check learners' understanding. They provide useful guidance to learners in class.

Assessors accurately assess apprentices' skills, knowledge and behaviours relating to the industry. They usefully take account of employers' views in this. Communication with employers throughout the apprenticeship programme is now effective.

Managers are testing new approaches to reviewing apprentices' progress from their starting points. These are too new to demonstrate impact.

However, improvements to teaching have not yet resulted in a consistently high quality of education. A few teachers still do not manage theoretical learning and assessment effectively. They do not take sufficient account of learners' previous learning. As a result, the most able learners in these lessons are not challenged to build on their excellent knowledge and skills.

**What progress have teachers and assessors made in ensuring learners and apprentices build on their existing skills and knowledge, transfer new knowledge to their long-term memories and apply key concepts fluently?**

**Significant progress**

Managers have focused very effectively on supporting teachers with planning learning. Teachers and assessors carefully plan and sequence their curriculum. Consequently, learners and apprentices quickly grasp the key concepts of their subjects. They build on their previous knowledge and skills effectively. As a result, more learners achieve their qualifications.

Teachers and assessors present new theoretical learning very effectively. They recap previous learning at the start of each lesson. Teachers and assessors check that learners and apprentices have understood important concepts. Learners frequently practise and reinforce these in lessons. Apprentices consolidate and extend their learning as a result of the work they do in the workplace.

Teachers accurately assess learners' progress. Many check and extend learners' understanding by asking probing questions. Teachers provide helpful feedback on how learners and apprentices can improve their vocational skills. As a result, learners understand the professional standards expected of them.

In vocational sessions, teachers expertly introduce new techniques. They explain and demonstrate each step meaningfully. They help learners and apprentices to progressively build their knowledge and practical skills. For example, hairdressing learners gradually refine their cutting and colouring skills. They gain confidence in applying new techniques and treatments. Assessors set increasingly challenging construction tasks for carpentry apprentices. This enables apprentices to adapt their practice on-site. For example, they complete complex tasks such as installing staircases.

Learners and apprentices recognise the skills and knowledge they develop. They apply their learning to vocational contexts and work with increasing confidence. For example, learners on level 3 sports programmes build on their previous learning about physiology from level 2. They accurately carry out measurements of lung capacity using a flow meter.

**What progress have leaders and managers made in enabling learners who have high needs to enhance their independence through good-quality programmes, tailored to meet their individual needs?**

**Significant progress**

Leaders have taken very swift action to improve provision. They have very effectively redesigned the specialist provision into three clearly defined strands. These take account of the needs of individuals to ensure learners are on the right programme.

Managers have introduced appropriate new qualifications for learners. They have rapidly increased opportunities for learners to grow in independence. For example, learners progressively build independence in accessing the local community. They visit shops, use public transport and take part in community events.

Staff plan learning very effectively to take account of learners' existing skills. Those who aspire to progress to vocational study programmes learn useful skills. Learners progress quickly towards their next stage of learning.

Support staff and teachers work together effectively. Staff share information on learners' individual needs and personal targets effectively. Learners receive very effective support in class. Learners with complex mobility and health needs benefit from tailored support. As a result, learners make excellent progress.

Learners develop a wide range of new skills. They accurately recognise what they have learned. They use the skills gained at college when at home. For example, learners can apply their skills in cooking to help their parents and carers at home. They apply their knowledge of how weeds affect the soil to maintaining the garden.

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